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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD AND E. D. COPE.

— The appropriation of money for scientific purposes by the Congress of the United States is a just source of national pride, as it is a means of national development and prosperity. The scientific men who have the disbursement of this money hold a trust for science, and their use of it is watched by the scientific men of all countries with interest. The expenditures have been, as it appears to us, generally well directed. One of our national establishments, however, seems to us to be in danger of absolute perversion from scientific uses and purposes, though, perhaps, intelligent attention directed to the situation may be the means of arresting such a misfortune. We refer to the National Museum at Washington. By its present organization it contemplates an exhibition of the products of the United States, both raw and manufactured. At the same time it does not embrace the agencies necessary for the prosecution of scientific research, either by making collections or supporting investigators. These latter objects are within the plan which the director, Professor Baird, hopes to see realized in the future, and it is earnestly to be desired that he may be able to accomplish so important a project. We must confess, however, to a sense of disappointment in learning that this was not the original basis on which the institution was created. It might, indeed, amount to this practically, were it not that manufactured products are included in the objects to be displayed in its halls; but the introduction of this item so overbalances the scales as to leave the future of scientific collections precarious, to say the least of it. We do not see how it is possible to avoid the crowding of the building with a kind of material which has no place in a scientific museum, and which can easily occupy all the space and consume all the money which Congress can grant it. The paternity of the project for a national museum was altogether scientific, and unless this object continues predominant, it is likely to divert the lives of a certain number of scientific men from their true channels, unless they abandon it altogether. For aught that we know, the situation may be past remedy, and the scientific element may already read the "handwriting on the wall." But we hope not. The most effective remedy would be to limit the exhibition of

manufactured products of the world to those which preceded the iron age of human industry. By cutting off everything that belongs to the industrial history of the iron age, pure science will save a great amount of money and a great deal of invaluable space.—C.

—The year 1884 will be notable from the important discoveries in vertebrate biology and invertebrate palæontology. It had been suspected and even stated that two mammals, the duckbill and Echidna, laid eggs; but for the first time, late in the last year, was full and convincing proof afforded by two independent observers of the fact that both of these monotremes lay large eggs, with a soft parchment-like shell, which are placed in the mammary pouch, where they incubate until the young are hatched in a partially developed state.

Late in the year also came the announcement that Dr. Lindström had discovered a fossil scorpion in the upper Silurian (Ludlow) of the island of Gotland. The presence of the stigmata, proves that it breathed air directly and was a true land animal. The publication of this important news brought to light the fact that a fossil scorpion of the same genus had previously been obtained by Dr. Hunter from the upper Ludlow beds of Lanarkshire, Scotland. This two-fold discovery carries the existence of Arachnids from the Carboniferous to the upper Silurian horizon.

Still nearer the close of the year, at the last meeting in 1884 of the French Academy, M. Charles Brongniart announced the discovery in the middle Silurian of Calvados of an insect's wing referred to a cockroach. This transfers the first appearance of insect life from the upper Devonian to the middle Silurian.

On the other hand the discovery of trilobites in the Australian Cretaceous beds was announced last year in the *Geological Magazine*; so that this type of Arthropod life is carried up from the Carboniferous to the chalk period. It will be remembered that fossil vertebrates in beds near the base of the upper Silurian of this country were reported in this magazine during last autumn by Prof. E. W. Claypole. Thus the geological record is in a single year profoundly changed, and no one can foretell what discoveries may be made in the immediate future.

—The Geological Survey of Canada is undergoing one of those periodical attacks which politicians of the less educated type make upon all government institutions which they do not understand or appreciate. As usual, they do not perceive the necessity of understanding the principles of the geological structure of the country before satisfactory "practical" results can be obtained; but are crying for less theoretical and more "practical" geology. If they will make large appropriations to the survey

under Dr. Selwyn, they will in time get all the practical ends they are after; but they must let their able chief develop the subject in the only practicable way known to science, and which he is abundantly able to accomplish.

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RECENT LITERATURE.

DE NADAILLAC'S PREHISTORIC AMERICA.¹—In the present state of American archæology a general work on prehistoric America would be perhaps regarded as premature, or at least as a temporary makeshift. The French author, however, has had the courage to venture on the attempt to depict the pre-Columbian history of both Americas, covering the whole field of American anthropology. His work appeared in 1882. The present work is based on a translation of De Nadaillac's work. The original contained a good many unreliable conclusions, mixed with valuable or well ascertained facts, there being on the whole little discrimination whatever in the material used. In its present shape, however, having passed through the editorial hands of Mr. W. H. Dall, who has added some new material, we do not see but that it forms an excellent and, in the main, reliable account of American primitive times. There is a popular demand for such a work; its style is light and clear, perhaps not always so sober and circumstantial as we could wish, but on the whole the book in its American dress is timely. The chapter on the origin of man in America is almost wholly Mr. Dall's, who has only retained some references to Central American and Peruvian myths from the original. As it stands, therefore, the book may be considered as a fairly good résumé of the better known facts of American archæology from a more or less European standpoint. The chapters are headed as follows: man and the mastodon; the kitchen-middens and the caves; the mound-builders; pottery, weapons and ornaments of the mound-builders; the cliff-dwellers and the inhabitants of the pueblos; the people of Central America; Peru; the men of America, and the origin of man in America.

The views concerning the Toltecs and their successors, the Aztecs, and their monuments are moderate. Montezuma's so-called "empire" was apparently little more than a confederation of tribes. Their buildings are but a few centuries old; their civilization of spontaneous growth, and very recent compared with those of the old world. As to the connection between the Central American nations and the mound-builders, this book is conservative, not conceding any such intimate relation. So far good,

¹ *Prehistoric America*. By the MARQUIS DE NADAILLAC. Translated by N. D'ANVERS. Edited by W. H. DALL. With 219 illustrations. New York and London, S. P. Putnam's Sons, 1884. 8vo, pp. 566. \$4.